

## GOD WORKS ADVERSITY FOR GOOD - Part 5 - Acts 23:6-11 – November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009

- This is part five of a series that we began a few weeks ago back in chapter 22 titled; "God Works Adversity for Good."
- Here in the text before us, the Apostle Paul is going to rise from the pages of scripture, and show us several ways that God does this.
- We looked at a number of these ways in our previous studies, and by way of both review and introduction we'll start with the first one.

### 1. In our pain and suffering (22:23-24)

- Paul's about to be flogged. This form of torture was so cruel inflicting such unspeakable pain and suffering one either confessed or died.

### 2. Through our legal rights (22:25)

- Paul exercises his legal rights as a Roman citizen. As a citizen it was against the law to bind him and a capital offense to scourge him.

### 3. By our weaknesses (22:26-28)

- Despite his weak appearance, Paul, who was born a Roman citizen, confounds the Roman commander who had to pay a big price.

### 4. Through our circumstances (22:29-30)

- Had Paul not been in these adverse circumstances, he would not have had an opportunity to preach to the chief priests and Sanhedrin.

### 5. In having a clear conscience (23:1)

- Paul is saying that his conscience is not his guide, God is his guide, and because of that, his conscience is clear before God.

### 6. By admitting our fault (23:2-5)

- Here, Paul does what most won't and admits his fault when he tells them that he didn't realize that Ananias was the high priest.

### 7. By exercising discernment (23:6-8)

6 Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead." 7 When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)

- v6 Paul knows some were Sadducees and some Pharisees then says he's a Pharisee whose being tried for his hope in resurrection.
- v7 Upon hearing this, a dispute erupts between the Pharisees and the Sadducees and causes a division in the entire assembly.
- v8 We're told the Sadducees say there's no resurrection of the dead, nor are their angels or spirits, but Pharisees believe in them all.

- Why does Paul do what he does here, and say what he says here? He must know that he will start an argument by what he says.
- I believe Paul is exercising good discernment. Here's why; "He's not getting anywhere with the adversarial attitudes of his audience."

One commentator said it this way; "Paul seems to have read his audience and saw they were not conducive to the gospel - the actions of the high priest and the attitudes of those present made this plain. So, Paul gives up on preaching the gospel, and does what he can to preserve his liberty before this council that wanted to lynch him."

"The Apostle obeyed the injunction, 'Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' He saw how hopeless it was to plead his cause before so prejudiced an assembly, and therefore he raised another issue. He knew that the Pharisees and Sadducees hated each other even worse than they hated him; and, therefore, he cast in a spark upon their combustible materials, and set them in a blaze. The two parties left their victim, and turned their weapons against each other."

Charles Spurgeon

### 8. In the midst of chaos (23:9-10)

9 There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. "We find nothing wrong with this man," they said. "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" 10 The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.

- v9 There's a great uproar when the Pharisees begin to argue in favor of Paul because of their beliefs about the resurrection of the dead.
- v10 The dispute becomes so violent that the commander has to have Paul taken into the barracks fearing that he will be torn to pieces.

- This is the third time that the crowd is thrown into chaos and starts a riot because of Paul. The last time it was over the word Gentiles.
- In the midst of the chaos from this mob that wants to tear Paul to pieces God is still in control. He's holding it and bringing it all together.

### 9. Despite our discouragement (23:11a)

11a The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! ...

- v11a The following "night," the Lord both appears to, and stands near to Paul and tells him to; "Take courage," and be of good cheer!
- Paul must have been so discouraged over his failure to win his Jewish brethren, yet the Lord is there with him to "cheer him up."
- It's important to notice that it's during the darkness and anguish of the night that the Lord appears to Paul all alone in that dungeon.

"Bold, courageous, fearless during the day, the night of loneliness finds the strength spent, and the enemy is never slow to take advantage of that fact."

G. Campbell Morgan

"Amid the uncongenial sights and sounds of the barracks, the heart of the Apostle would have sunk had it not been for the heavenly visitation. Jesus will not leave His faithful servants alone – He will reveal Himself to us when we are in sore distress. Never let us despair, for the Lord has more work for us to do yet."

Charles Spurgeon

### 10. Because of His promises (23:11b)

11b ...As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

- v11b The Lord promises Paul that not only will he survive this trial, but that he will go to Rome with the gospel as he did in Jerusalem.
- It's not just "that" God will do it; it's the "way" that God will do it. God is going to provide Paul with an all expense paid trip to Rome.
- God is promising and reassuring Paul of His presence and providence and this one promise will get him through unspeakable adversity.

"This assurance meant much to Paul during the delays and anxieties of the next two years, and goes far to account for the calm and dignified bearing which from now on marks him out as a master of events rather than their victim." F.F. Bruce

"A divine decree ordains for you greater and more trying service than as yet you have seen. A future awaits you, and no power on the earth or under the earth can rob you of it; therefore be of good cheer." Charles Spurgeon